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Death penalty back on table, new D.A. says

Capital punishment will only be used in 'egregious' cases, prosecutor says

FROM CITY NEWS SERVICE

LOS ANGELES — District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced March 25 that his office will seek the death penalty only in exceedingly rare cases, rescinding a directive by his predecessor that barred prosecutors from seeking capital punishment against defendants charged with special circumstance murders.

"I remain unwaveringly committed to the comprehensive and thorough evaluation of every special circumstance murder case prosecuted in Los Angeles County, in consultation with the murder victim's survivors and with full input on the mitigating and aggravating factors of each case, to ensure that the punishment sought by the office is just, fair, fitting and appropriate," the



Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced March 25 that he has rescinded the 'no death penalty' policy of his predecessor. Hochman said he would seek capital punishment only 'in exceedingly rare cases.'

Courtesy photo

district attorney said in a statement.

According to the statement, the office will only consider pursuing a potential death sentence after an extensive and comprehensive review and only in exceedingly rare cases, recognizing that the death penalty "should be restricted to the most egregious sets of circumstances."

Defense attorneys will be offered "enhanced opportunities" to share information about their clients with the office's Special Circumstances Committee and the district attorney when the death penalty is under consideration, and the views of victims' survivors will be sought and considered before any final determinations are made, according to the District Attorney's Office.

The move by Hochman immediately rescinded a directive from former District Attorney George Gascón, who announced shortly after being sworn into office in December 2020 that the District Attorney's Office would

no longer pursue the death penalty under his watch. He said then that he "does not believe the death penalty is an appropriate punishment in any case."

Two men were subsequently sentenced to death in high-profile Los Angeles County murder cases that had been tried under prior District Attorney Jackie Lacey's administration, but were still awaiting sentencing when Lacey lost her re-election bid to Gascón.

In July 2021, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler went ahead with a jury's recommendation for a death sentence for Michael Gargiulo, who was convicted of killing and mutilating two Southland women. The judge said he had "read and considered" a statement from Gascón, which was not read in open court.

Just over two weeks before Gargiulo's sentencing, Superior Court Judge Raul Sahagun refused to allow a statement to be read in court on behalf of See PENALTY, Page 11

STREET BEAT

'How open are you to opposing viewpoints?'



KYLA CLAYTON
INGLEWOOD

"I would like to say that I'm open, but to be honest, I'm not because people have gone crazy and I just can't listen to crazy."



THOMAS HINES
LOS ANGELES

"I'm open because I want to understand where people get their ideas from and how they feel. Doesn't mean I'll agree, but I do try to listen."



TATIANA MONROE
INGLEWOOD

"As long as it's their own idea. Sometimes people are just rattling off what they heard and they don't really have their own thought or opinion."

FIGHTING BACK



Yvonne Wheeler, left, president of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, joins U.S. Postal Service workers and other federal employees March 23 in downtown Los Angeles protesting projected cuts in federal spending.

Photo by Lorenzo Gomez

City seeking \$2 billion in recovery aid from state

By JOSE HERRERA
Contributing Writer

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Mayor Karen Bass and four City Council members returned to Los Angeles March 24 after a trip to Sacramento resulted in 22 California legislators requesting nearly \$2 billion in wildfire recovery aid for Los Angeles.

"Meetings were productive," Bass told City News Service in a short phone interview. "It is not as though we expected to walk away with a check, but we absolutely walked away with encouragement and support."

"We have homework we need to do in terms of getting the Legislature some more specific information in a couple of areas, but we are very encouraged," she added.

The L.A. delegation met with Gov. Gavin Newsom and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, and Assemblywoman Tina McKinnor, D-Inglewood, chair of the Los Angeles See AID, Page 11

Jose Herrera is a reporter for City News Service.

'Auntie Maxine' still fighting the good fight

By JANICE HAYES KYSER
Contributing Writer

LOS ANGELES — She's been fighting the good fight for Black people and other marginalized groups for more than four decades and "Auntie Maxine," as U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters is affectionately known by some of her constituents, is in no ways tired of it.

Waters, the first woman and first African-American chair of the House Financial Services



Maxine Waters



RUTHIE SANFORD



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RUTNIE SANFORD
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"I'm open to listening to opposing viewpoints, but I have a hard time listening if I don't like what they're saying."

Compiled by Cynthia Gibson
in Inglewood.

This Week in Black History

March 28, 1990

U.S. President George W. Bush posthumously awarded Olympic track and field athlete Jesse Owens with the Congressional Gold Medal. Owens won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, single-handedly crushing Adolf Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy.

For more information on black history, arts and culture, visit www.caamuseum.org



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LOS ANGELES — She's been fighting the good fight for Black people and other marginalized groups for more than four decades and "Auntie Maxine," as U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters is affectionately known by some of her constituents, is in no ways tired of it.

Waters, the first woman and first African-American chair of the House Financial Services Committee, and currently the ranking member, is relentless — consistently and courageously advocating for women, children, people of color, the poor, veterans and seniors.

For the seemingly indefatigable 86-year-old, whose days are long and whose stamina defies her years, speaking truth to power is as much a part of who she is as her abiding faith and four-inch stilettos.

"Inside of this petite freedom fighter is a sassy 21-year-old," says Angela Rye, commentator, advocate, political consultant and former executive director and general counsel to the Congressional Black Caucus. "Congresswoman Waters moves effortlessly around every protest, parade and the halls of Congress in high heels, I have never seen her in flats, but she is always on your level, so remarkably approachable and connected to the people and the cause. She is timeless



Maxine Waters

and she always knows what time it is."

Serving others is in her DNA. Waters, one of 13 children, grew up in St. Louis caring for her siblings, attending church, and watching her single mother, who married at 16 and didn't complete elementary school, do whatever was needed to care for her family. Waters moved to California with her first husband and two children in the 1970s, seeking greater opportunities for their family. She says her Midwest roots and her mother's unwavering work ethic inspire her to this day.

"I am driven by my mother's tenacity and creativity and a sense of fairness. ... All of my life I have been confronted with a lack of fairness," Waters said. "I understand what it is like to be disrespected and dismissed. I always felt there was something I could do to advocate for my people. That's what gets me up every day."

Former U.S. Rep. Barbara



Lee, who represented California's 12th Congressional District from 1998 to 2025, says Waters set the standard for those who came behind her.

"She's a woman who is ahead of her time and always on time," said Lee, who is currently running for mayor of Oakland. "I look up to her and I am grateful for her leadership on so many levels."

Initially, Waters said she

planned to pursue a career in social work, but realized while working for Head Start that the real power was in politics and governance, so she changed course.

She served 14 years in the California Assembly rising to chair of the Democratic Caucus before being elected to Congress in 1990, replacing the retiring Rep. Augustus Hawkins, who served South Los Angeles in

Congress for 28 years.

While serving in the state Legislature, Waters was responsible for the largest divestment of state pension funds from South Africa, landmark affirmative action legislation and the nation's first statewide Child Abuse Prevention Training, the prohibition of police strip searches for non-violent misdemeanors and the introduction of the nation's first

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